

Aaron in the Wild Woods.

By JOEL CHANDLER HARRIS.

THE APPARITION OF THE FOX HUNTERS.

As the fall came on the young men—and some of the older ones, too—began to indulge in the sport of fox hunting. They used no guns, but pursued Reynard with horse and hound in the English fashion. The foxes in that region were mostly gray, but the red ones had begun to come in, and as they came the gray began to pack up their belongings—as the saying is—and seek homes elsewhere.

The Turner old fields, not far from the Abernethy place, and still closer to the Swamp, were famous for their foxes—first for the grays and afterward for the reds. There seemed to be some attraction for them in the old fields. The scrub pines, growing thickly together, and not higher than a man's waist, and the briar patches scattered about, afforded a fine covert for Mr. Fox, gray or red, being aided and abetted in summer time, and sheltered from the cold winter winds. And it was fine for Mr. Fox it was finer for the hunters. Mrs. Fairbridge could lead her brood in safety out of sight of man, and here the Sparrows and smaller birds were safe from the Blue Falcon, and the keen eye and swift wing.

And Mr. Fox was as cunning as his nose was sharp. He knew that the best place to make his home in the Turner old fields was not low, and what could be more convenient for Mr. Fox than that—especially at the dead hours of night when he went creeping abroad as noiselessly as a shadow, pretending that he was not there, and waiting for the hunter to come? Indeed that was the main reason why Mr. Fox lived in the Turner old fields, or went there at night, for he was no tree climber. And so it came to pass that when those who were fond of fox hunting wanted to indulge in that sport they avoided the Swamp, and went straight to the Turner old fields.

Now, when George Gossett and his party of hunting companions came for a time to go frolicking about the country at night on the plea that they were looking after the safety of the plantations, they concluded that it was better to go to the Turner old fields, and go to fox hunting occasionally. Each had two or three hounds to brag on, so that when all the dogs were brought together they made a pack of more than respectable size.

One Sunday, when the fall was fairly advanced, the air being crisp and bracing, and the moonlight gleaming on the road, the fox hunting season of the next morning. They were to go home, get their dogs and meet at Gossett's, his plantation lying nearest to the Turner old fields. This arrangement was all very well, but the young men stayed all night with George Gossett, ate breakfast before daybreak and started for the Turner old fields. As they set out a question arose whether they should go through the Abernethy place, the nearest way, or whether they should go around by the road. The darkness of night was still over wood and field, but there was a suggestion of gray in the east. If the hunting party had been composed of only those who had been in the habit of patrolling with George Gossett, prompt enquiry would have been made of the public road, but young Gossett had invited an acquaintance from another settlement to join them—a gentleman who had reached the years of maturity, but who was vigorous enough to enjoy a cross-country ride to hounds.

This gentleman had been told of the strange experience of the patriots in Mr. Abernethy's pasture lot. Some of the details had been suppressed. For one thing, the young man had not confessed to him how badly he had been frightened. They simply told him enough to arouse his curiosity. When, therefore, the choice of route was between the public road and the short-cut through the Abernethy pasture, the gentleman was eager to go by way of the pasture where his young friends had already been described. "When they displayed some hesitation in the matter, he called them smartly on their lack of nerve, and in this way shamed them into going the nearest way. George Gossett, who had no lack of more physical courage, consented to lead the party, and the other gentleman followed him. But when they were about half-way through the pasture, the gentleman who was moved by curiosity, and who attributed the mystery of the affair to frequent visits to Mr. Follislow's stillhouse, had any stomach for the journey through the pasture, for not even George Gossett, in whom the spirit of the hunt had no long period of repose, suggested that they touch up their horses and give their companions a scare. This suggestion was promptly acted on. The companion, his companions made caused the young man to pause a moment before putting up his horse to relate the tale. He suggested that several hundred yards between him and the party with Gossett. He realized this as he rode after them, but was consoled by the fact that, in the event of any trouble, he had a better opportunity to escape than they did.

But he had hardly gone fifty yards from the double gates before he heard some sort of noise in that direction. He half turned in his saddle and looked behind him. The vague gray of the morning had become so indistinctly mixed and mingled with the darkness of the night that he could not see. There was a sound of hoofs, and he was moving rapidly, whatever it was, but the gray light was no dim and gave such shadowy shape even to objects close at hand that he found it impossible either to gratify his curiosity or satisfy his fears. So he settled himself firmly in the saddle, clapped spurs to his horse, and rode headlong after his companions. He looked around occasionally, but the black mass was always nearer. The faster his horse went the faster came the Thing.

Each time he looked back his alarm rose higher, for the Thing was closer whenever he looked. At last his alarm grew to such

proportions, that he ceased to look back, but addressed himself entirely to the work of urging his horse to higher speed. Presently he heard quick, fierce snorts on his right, and his next sight of the Thing, its course was parallel with his own, and it was not more than twenty yards away.

He saw enough, for his alarm to rise to the height of terror. He saw something that had the head and feet of a black horse, but the body was wanting. Not that there was a body and a rider, but the rider was a long, pale gray robe, and he was headless! It was the Black Demon that the young man had seen in this pasture on a former occasion. He was now more terrible than ever, for he was guided by a headless rider. The young man would have checked his horse, but the effort was in vain. The horse had eyes. He also had seen the Thing, and he had sworn away from it, but he was too frightened to pay any attention to it or to the Black Thing was passing faster than the lighted horse, and it soon drew away, the pale gray robe of the rider fluttering about like a three signal of warning. The young man's horse was soon under control, and in a few minutes he came up with his companions. He found them huddled together, and when he asked them what they had been instinctively made by the horses. The dogs, too, were acting queerly.

The men appeared to be somewhat surprised to see their companion come galloping up to them. After riding away from the young man, he had taken time to himself to leave the double gates open, the hounds had concluded to wait for him when they came to the bars that opened on the public road. But the gallop of their horses had subsided into a walk when they were some distance from that point. They were conversing about the merits of their favorite dogs, when suddenly they heard from behind them the sound of a galloping horse. They saw, as the young man had seen, a dark, moving mass, gradually assume the shape of a black horse with headless rider, wearing a long, pale gray robe. The apparition was moving further from them when it passed that it had been from their companion, whom, in a spirit of mischief, they had deserted, but the Black Thing threatened to come closer, for when it had gone beyond them, it changed its color, described a half circle, and vanished from sight on the side of the pasture opposite to that on which it had first appeared.

"What do you think now?" said George Gossett, speaking in a low tone to the gentleman who had been inclined to grow more wary with the experience of the patriots.

"What do I think? Why, I think it's right queer if the chap we left at the double gates isn't trying to get even with us by riding around like a wild Indian, and waving his bloody handkerchief," replied the doubting gentleman.

"Why, man, he's riding a gray horse," one of the others explained.

This put another face on the matter, and the gentleman made no further remark. In fact, before anything else could be said, the young man in question came galloping up.

"Did you fellows see it?" he inquired. But he had no need to inquire. Their attitude and the uneasy movements of their horses showed unmistakably that they had seen it. "Which way did it go?" was the next question. There was no need to make reply. The direction in which the houndsman glanced every second showed unmistakably which way it went.

"Let's get out of here," said the young man in the next breath. And there was no need to urge even his simple proposition, for, by common consent, and with one impulse, horses and men started for the bars at a rapid trot. When the bars were taken down they were not left down. Each one was put carefully back in its proper place, for, though this was but a slight matter, it was the only way to make reply. The direction in which the houndsman glanced every second showed unmistakably which way it went.

"It certainly had that appearance," replied the doubting gentleman, "but—" "No more now," said the young man. "It came so close to me that I could put my hand on it, and I noticed particular that the Thing on the back of the Thing didn't have no sign of head, no more than my big toe has got a head."

The exaggeration of the young man was not noticed. He had been so close to the ten yards of him he would have fallen off his horse in a fit.

"And what was you doing all that time?" George Gossett inquired. His tone implied a grave doubt.

"Trying to get away from that infernal creature," replied the other, frankly. "It was the same horse that got after us that night," the young man continued. "I knowed it by the black in his eyes and the red on the inside of his nose. Why, it looked to me you could 'a' lit a cigar by holding it close to his eye."

"I know how short you are," said George Gossett, disdainfully, "and I don't believe you took time to notice all these things."

"Skeed!" exclaimed the other, "why, that ain't no name for it—no name at all. That was the spirit of the hunt, and I had no long period of repose, suggested that they touch up their horses and give their companions a scare. This suggestion was promptly acted on. The companion, his companions made caused the young man to pause a moment before putting up his horse to relate the tale. He suggested that several hundred yards between him and the party with Gossett. He realized this as he rode after them, but was consoled by the fact that, in the event of any trouble, he had a better opportunity to escape than they did."

But he had hardly gone fifty yards from the double gates before he heard some sort of noise in that direction. He half turned in his saddle and looked behind him. The vague gray of the morning had become so indistinctly mixed and mingled with the darkness of the night that he could not see. There was a sound of hoofs, and he was moving rapidly, whatever it was, but the gray light was no dim and gave such shadowy shape even to objects close at hand that he found it impossible either to gratify his curiosity or satisfy his fears. So he settled himself firmly in the saddle, clapped spurs to his horse, and rode headlong after his companions. He looked around occasionally, but the black mass was always nearer. The faster his horse went the faster came the Thing.

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All, but the men. If we find them shall I use my teeth?"

"We'll not see the men, Grandson of Abdullah. This is not their hour."

"But if we find them, Son of Ben Ali, grandson of Abdullah, there is no time to lose. Save your teeth for your own use, Grandson of Abdullah," was the response.

As they entered the double gates, which Aaron was surprised to find open, Timoleon gave a series of fierce snorts, which was the same as saying, "What did I tell you, Son of Ben Ali? Look round! There is one; the others are galloping further on."

"I am warning you are right, Grandson of Abdullah."

As much for the horse's comfort as his own, Aaron had folded a large blanket over hanging in the stable and was using it as a saddle. He lifted himself up, and back towards Timoleon's group, seized the blanket with his left hand, and holding it by one corner, shook out the folds. He had no intention whatever of frightening any one, his sole idea being to use the blanket as a saddle. He was not a horseman, but he was a hunter, and he was not to be outdone by a horseman.

He would have turned back, but in the event of pursuit he would be compelled to lead his pursuers into the Abernethy place, or along the public road, and either course would have been embarrassing if he were pursued at all, he preferred to take the risk of capture in the wide pasture. As a last resort he could slip from Timoleon's back and give the horse the word to use both teeth and heels.

And this was why the fox hunters saw the apparition of a black horse and a headless rider. "Shall I ride him down, Son of Ben Ali?" shouted the Black Stallion.

"Bear to the right; bear to the right, Grandson of Abdullah," was the reply. And so the apparition lifted past the young man who had left the double gates open, and he was not to be outdone by a horseman.

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THE TRAMP IN OCEANIA.

From Jupiter Inlet to Cape Elizabeth, from Newport News to Alameda, the husky voice of the knight of the road can be heard at kitchen doors about meal time and at the police sergeant's desk when the weather is cold or wet, and darkness has fallen upon city streets.

Ubiquitous and often persistent under the most discouraging circumstances, it may nevertheless be said of him that even at his own miserable business he is a sorry failure. From carefully compiled data of missions and other benevolent societies, it appears that very few tramps, not taking into account those not suffering from chronic disease, live much longer than five years after entrance upon a vagabond life in this country, while in Europe they are more or less still.

There is, however, one spot upon the earth's surface, that is, it is true, under the busy and bustling of large cities, where, under skies almost always blue, with cooling airs to temper the ardors of summer, and wide-branching forests of shelter in the brief rainy season, with all the food and drink, within reach of his do-nothing hands, and no need of the chronic laborer may spend years of healthy animal existence. And not only so, but should he choose to be ambitious to rule in his own city, he may wield a power almost as absolute as that of a New York alderman in his native ward and outside of it he be both feared and favored.

For years the city of Papeete, the capital of Tahiti, has been a cave of Adulams, to which all who are in debt or difficulty have flocked, and where they find a refuge in which even the red-headed robber may find absolute safety from the law of the land. All that is necessary for him to do is to be made free of the beachcombers' union, and for once in his life to make a true confession to a confidential agent of the police.

For such it truly is. Neither the unspeakable horrors of a Tahitian jail nor the prospect of life deportation to the French penal settlements of New Caledonia or French Guiana make this refuge of such great value to the fugitive. Quite recently he has put on a bold front in consequence of having made a sort of alliance with the aborigines, who have, for some years past, been vigorously but wisely conducting their payment of taxes to the French government.

Two months ago this unwilling took the form of absolute refusal to pay at all, the natives counting on the active support of the beachcombers, should force be used against them. Only the timely appearance of an English gunboat prevented a serious outbreak. The news was first brought to this country by the barkentine Galilee, made famous by Stevenson, and with the Vine and City of Papeete, carrying the name of the Tahitian and San Francisco, and in practice a regular mode of communication between the United States and this remote spot.

Under her mail contract she was obliged to which anchor, just as the troubles seemed most threatening. Later intelligence was received from the American Steamship Company's vessel Mowee, that the danger is over for the present, but that a riot, or something more serious still, is only postponed for a short time.

Among these men, practically outlaws, and representing views of all nations, many of them are trained to the most educated and full of dare-devil courage. A few are citizens of this country, and their feeling against the authorities is more intense than that of their fellows, on account of the death of more than one of them from alleged inhuman treatment in jail.

One of the most influential of their numbers is a physician, who once had a very lucrative practice in San Francisco. He was arrested on a charge of murder, a woman having died as the result of a criminal operation performed by the doctor. So black was the case, and so strong the adverse sentiment, that he was compelled to give bail to the amount of \$10,000 in gold coin in order to save himself from months of confinement while the case was pending.

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in the army, who was supposed to have been mortally wounded in a duel with the lady's brother.

The beautiful lady and the moribund gentleman now occupy a low, broad house overlooking the city of Papeete. They live a quiet but luxurious life. The few intimate friends they have are chiefly cultured Americans and German residents. Should the reader ever visit Tahiti and its lively capital, Papeete, and the unexpected often happens, he may, as he pauses to look at the seaward view, after climbing an ash, hear a rich, velvety contralto voice, accompanied by masterly style on the "cello." And often a little knot of impetuous and half-killed beachcombers with artistic tastes will be found listening to these aristocratic vagabonds, as they calmly smoke their pipes under the two spreading bananas at the gateway.

The last time I saw the Vine was about 900 miles southeast of Hawaii. It was blowing a hard gale from the north, and the steamship Monowai, bound to San Francisco from Melbourne, was making very dry weather of it with engines racing at full speed. A way to wonder if the Vine was scotching along under lower jib, double-reefed foresail and storm try-sail, pointing almost in the wind's eye. She was making at least two knots to our one. She was so close she passed so near that I could see the faces of her skipper as he walked the weather quarter, her deck gleaming as white as a newly-laundered sheet, though the green water was pouring like a mill race out of her lee scuppers. That trip was the fastest ever made from the Marquesas Islands to San Francisco by any vessel under sail.

Where is she now? Following the waves between some of the South Sea Islands and Australia, and making phenomenal runs, or blackbirding among the Gilbert Islands. Perhaps some dashing beachcomber at Papeete may be able to answer the question. I am certain it is that the crack tramp schooner of the South Pacific has not tied up at any American wharf for some time past.

BRANSCOMBE ASHLEY.

THE GAMBLER'S LIFE.

A Prominent Professional Says That It Doesn't Pay.

In a recent conversation with a Sun reporter Pat Sheedy, the famous gambler, related his mind concerning a matter which has been a source of aggravation and a matter of wonder to him for many days.

"You cannot," said Sheedy, "discuss the average mind of the idea that the gambler is a man of money. Nothing will convince people that his purse is not always full, and that he does not live on the fat of the land. Where people get this idea, and why, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, they retain it until they die. It is one of the mysteries of the human mind. I have tried in vain to solve for years. It is a mistake, a great mistake. It would almost be a joke if it were not one of the saddest conditions a gambler can find himself in."

"I do not like to talk about myself. Never in all my long career have I sought notoriety. All of my gambling has been done in an open way, and frequently incidents have occurred which newspaper men have regarded as interesting enough to print. Due to show you what a fallacy this belief about gamblers is, however, I am going to talk about myself for a moment."

"In this country I am held as a successful gambler. As gamblers go I am successful. Maybe I am a little more successful than my fellows. But for many years, if it is true, that my periods of prosperity are a little longer than those of some of my fellows who have, like myself, given their lives to gambling. But does it mean that I am always prosperous? Does it mean that I am always well supplied with money? I never wait for a day or two, and I never have to go to a bank to get the money. No, no! It doesn't mean any of these things. Maybe you don't believe that Pat Sheedy has been at the bottom of the hill as many times as he has been at the top. How many people could you convince that he is a gambler? Not a dozen, I warrant you. Why, people would laugh. They think that Pat Sheedy, the man who breaks faro banks as little concern as he'd show over his dinner, is a man with unlimited resources. Let me tell you, though, that Pat Sheedy is a very ordinary mortal. He hasn't broken as many faro banks as he's been credited with, and he's seen as many bad days as any other business man."

"I call myself a business man because gambling is my business. I regard myself as a good business man because I am a good gambler. Few business men have devoted themselves more assiduously to their work than I have to mine. But the best of us fall at times, and the faro banks have broken me as many times or more than I have broken them. Everybody who knows me knows that I am a gambler, and I am a gambler, and the few cases over me I will not extol until I have got all of the bank's money or it has got all of mine. I have gone into a gambling house a rich man and come out penniless. I have gone in poor and come out wealthy. I have gone for weeks without a cent, and I have come out with a square meal. I have sat in gambling houses and seen men point at me and remark to someone else, 'There's Pat Sheedy, the lucky dog! when I didn't have the price of a shave in my pocket. I have always managed to keep a good appearance, because I always have plenty of dollars on me. I've not money. That's something you can't gamble away, and it's mighty handy that you can't. I've gone into a gambling house on a shoe string, run it up into the thousands, and then lost it. Next day the papers have published accounts of my having been done up. A week later I have won nearly \$5,000, and the same papers have printed long articles headed 'Pat Sheedy Breaks Another Bank.' Sometimes it worries me, sometimes it makes me angry, but more often than anything else it amuses me."

"Now if the gamblers have got all the money, where is it? Show me a gambler with a bank account; show me one with a bit of real estate. You can't do it. Pat Sheedy, the successful gambler, hasn't got any of it. If he had, would he be leaving his God's own country, all the time? Would he be chasing around the most obscure corners of the earth? No, sir. I can't gamble here, and I must gamble to live. I make my living at it, and a poor living it is. If I had money I wouldn't scrounge the earth for games to play. I'd stay right here in New York."

"Don't ever believe it, my friend. The gambler has a harder time than any other business man. Once in a while he gets what slow-going, plodding people might call a great deal of money. But it never lasts him long. More often he is obliged to borrow the means to live on from his friends."

"This general idea about gamblers, as I said before, I cannot understand. Maybe it comes from the fact that when we have money we are conspicuous, while when we are broke we are rarely seen. I can't attempt to explain it, but some time when you're writing about these things just insert a few lines about what Pat Sheedy has said today."—New York Sun.

A Rustler.

The dry goods merchant was explaining the situation to the new drummer he had just employed. "Your predecessor," he said, "has got his business all tangled up in the great old horse race. He has a difficult task getting order out of chaos."

"I don't know who Chaspin," cheerfully replied the drummer, "but I bet I'll sell him a bit of goods if I have to hang on to him a week."—Dry Goods Chronicle.

A Border Heroine.

We of Custer's command were swinging around to reopen the overland trail, every station of which in western Kansas was being captured by the Indians. We had gone into camp one night after a continuous ride of nearly one hundred miles, and everybody but the sentinels was fast asleep, when there came riding in from the northwest a girl eighteen years old, named Mary Thompson. She was riding a pony without saddle or bridle, and she was hatless and without shoes. Most of the men had been aroused and were anxious to hear her story before she reached the general's tent. Her report was terse and to the point. Ten miles to the northwest was a party of pioneers—eight warriors, twenty men and forty women and children. The camp had been attacked by Indians an hour before, and the girl had mounted her pony, dashed through the lines and galloped in search of aid. She had been followed for the first three or four miles by mounted Indians, but had distanced them.

Custer interrogated her concerning the situation of the camp and the strength of the Indians, and, helping the pioneers to hold their own through the night, the men were ordered back to their blankets. It was about an hour before daylight, when we moved, the girl riding at the head of the column, with the general and two or three scouts, and we were within half a mile of the camp when the darkness faded away and gave us a view of the situation. Then it was a swift dash at the hostiles, a sharp fight for ten minutes, and we had sent the band scurrying away.

In and about the wagon lay six dead and four wounded men, a dead or wounded woman and children. Every horse and mule was disabled, and had we waited a quarter of an hour longer the Indians would have "rushed" and carried the camp and wiped out every human soul. At midnight the Indians had cut off two of the outer wagons for a moment and made captive a boy ten years old—Mary Thompson's own brother. Her mother and father were among the dead, her brother carried away by the warriors as they fled before us.

The soldiers and pioneers crowded about the girl and gave her words of sympathy, and for a few minutes she hid away in one of the wagons to be alone with her grief. When she reappeared her tears had vanished and she announced her resolution to make an effort to recover her captive brother. Gen. Custer advised and argued with her, but she refused to go back to a point of safety with the surviving pioneers. She did not ask to go with the command, but intended to depend upon herself. I think she was a brave girl, and I am glad to say that the pioneers had she remained with us a few minutes longer. While the people were making ready for a start the rank and file learned of her determination. We outfitted her pony, handed her over a Winchester rifle and a revolver, and plenty of ammunition, supplies and food for several days, and nothing was lacking when she rode out of camp in the direction the Indians had pursued. Custer ordered two troopers to pursue and bring her back, but after a half hour's follow they returned, and she was handed over and returned. That was the way Mary Thompson came to us and left us, from the true she passed out of our sight no white man saw her again for weeks.

The adventures of the brave young girl for the next four months would make a book. The earliest scout attached to Custer's